

Message Text

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INFO AMEMBASSY BONN IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM
AMEMBASSY GABORONE
AMEMBASSY LAGOS
AMEMBASSY LONDON IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY LUSAKA
AMEMBASSY MAPUTO
AMEMBASSY OTTAWA IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY PARIS IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 PRETORIA 4763

E.O. 11652: XGDS-3
TAGS: PDEV, PORG, WA, SF
SUBJECT: NAMIBIA: COMMENTS OF VAN HEERDEN AND FOURIE
AND EMBASSY ASSESSMENT

1. EMBASSY POLITICAL COUNSELOR TAYLOR AND BRITISH EMBASSY
MINISTER SUMMERHAYES MET WITH VAN HEERDEN AGAIN AUGUST 15.
VAN HEERDEN APPEARED CONSIDERABLY LESS ALARMIST ABOUT THE
SITUATION ON THE NAMIBIAN/ANGOLAN BORDER AND THE ATTITUDE OF
SAG MILITARY LEADERS THAN HE HAD BEEN ON THE PREVIOUS MEETING
ON AUGUST 8. WHEN ASKED IF THIS IMPRESSION WAS CORRECT, VAN
HEERDEN SAID THE SITUATION WAS UNCHANGED FROM THE PREVIOUS WEEK
EXCEPT THAT THE INCIDENTS OVER THE WEEKEND HAD FURTHER RILED
THE MILITARY. HOWEVER, HE DID NOT SUGGEST, AS HE HAD AT THE
PREVIOUS MEETING, THAT THE MILITARY AT THIS POINT WERE PUSHING
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FOR REPRISAL ACTION AS A RESULT OF THE INCIDENTS OR FOR
PREEMPTIVE ATTACKS AGAINST THE REPORTED BUILD-UP.

2. VAN HEERDEN CONCEDED THAT THERE WAS NO CONCRETE EVIDENCE
THAT HE COULD PRESENT OF THE MOVEMENT OF SWAPO/MPLA/CUBAN FORCES TO
THE BORDER. THE MILITARY HAD EXPLAINED THAT AS LONG AS THEY
COULD NOT FLY RECONNAISSANCE MISSIONS OVER THE AREA, THEY COULD

NOT PRESENT DOCUMENTARY PROOF, BUT THEY HAD RELIABLE INTELLIGENCE THAT SUBSTANTIATED THE REPORTS. (DAO REPORTS THAT RECONNAISSANCE MISSIONS ARE FLOWN.) THE AG'S OFFICE, VAN HEERDEN SAID, WOULD BE PASSING TO AHTISAARI A DETAILED LIST OF SWAPO MILITARY AND TERRORIST ACTIVITIES. THIS PAPER WOULD CITE THE BUILD-UP ALONG THE BORDER, BUT WOULD NOT GIVE ANY PARTICULARS. VAN HEERDEN PROMISED TO SEND US A PAPER WITH THE SAME INFORMATION.

3. VAN HEERDEN EXPLAINED THAT WHEN HE HAD SAID LAST WEEK THAT THE SOUTH AFRICAN MILITARY BELIEVED THAT SWAPO INTENDED TO DECLARE POSSESSION OF THE BASES ACROSS THE BORDER AFTER INITIATION OF THE PROPOSAL, HE WAS REFERRING TO THE AREA NORTH OF THE BORDER, E.E., IN ANGOLA. THE MILITARY, HE SAID, SAW SWAPO ESTABLISHING FORWARD BASES IN THE BORDER AREA WHILE THE SAG WOULD BE FORCED TO WITHDRAW AND CONFINE ITSELF TO TWO BASES FAR FROM THE BORDER. THE RESULT WOULD BE TO INTIMIDATE THE LOCAL POPULATION. IT WAS SUGGESTED TO VAN HEERDEN THAT THIS WAS A POLITICAL PROBLEM AND NOT A CONCERN OF THE MILITARY COMMANDERS; VAN HEERDEN ARGUED THAT SUCH A SITUATION HAD MILITARY IMPLICATIONS.

4. VAN HEERDEN WAS ALSO MUCH MORE OPTIMISTIC THIS WEEK ABOUT RESOLUTION OF THE POLITICAL ISSUES. HE FELT THAT THERE WERE SIGNALS FROM WINDHOEK OF A MODUS VIVENDI ON THE VOTER REGISTRATION QUESTION AND HE CHANGED HIS ASSESSMENT OF LAST WEEK REGARDING THE ISSUE OF THE INDEPENDENCE DATE. HE AGREED
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THAT THE INDEPENDENCE DATE WOULD HAVE TO SLIP BUT REITERATED THAT THE ELECTIONS WOULD HAVE TO COME BEFORE THE END OF THE YEAR. THE BEST ARGUMENT HE COULD GIVE FOR HAVING ELECTIONS THIS YEAR WAS THAT THE SOUTH AFRICAN GOVERNMENT WANTED TO GET OUT OF NAMIBIA. HE ACKNOWLEDGED THAT A FEW MONTHS MORE AFTER 30 YEARS WAS NOT A LONG TIME, BUT CONTINUED TO ARGUE THE POINT ALTHOUGH WITH AN APPARENT LACK OF ENTHUSIASM.

5. VAN HEERDEN STRESSED THAT IT WAS IMPORTANT TO DEAL WITH THE ISSUES ONE AT A TIME AND CONCLUDED THAT THINGS WERE PROGRESSING WELL IN WINDHOEK. THE DISPELLING OF SUSPICION AND MISTRUST BETWEEN THE AGS STAFF AND AHTISAARI'S TEAM WAS REMARKABLE.

6. THIS MORNING, AUGUST 16, THE AMBASSADOR MET WITH BRAND FOURIE TO DISCUSS A NUMBER OF ISSUES INCLUDING THE SITUATION IN NAMIBIA. FOURIE OUTLINED SEVERAL IMPORTANT POINTS OF DIFFERENCE IN WORKING OUT AN ACCEPTABLE IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS. ON THE VOTER REGISTRATION ISSUE, FOURIE EMPHASIZED THERE WOULD BE NO SCRAPPING OF WHAT HAD BEEN DONE TO DATE BUT HE BELIEVED ARRANGEMENTS COULD BE MADE TO SATISFY THOSE WHO HAD QUESTIONS ABOUT THE PROCESS. FOURIE ALSO EXPRESSED CONSIDERABLE CONCERN

ABOUT THE COMPOSITION OF UN FORCES. HE SAID THE SAG WOULD NOT OBJECT TO BLACK UNITS IN UNTAG, BUT WOULD OBJECT TO CONTINGENTS FROM COUNTRIES WHICH HAD "ACTIVELY SUPPORTED" SWAPO. FOURIE ALSO SAID THAT THE SIZE OF THE UN FORCE WOULD BE AN ISSUE AND HE AGAIN OBJECTED TO PUBLIC STATEMENTS WHICH SEEMED TO PREJUDGE THIS ISSUE. FOURIE DID NOT AT FIRST MENTION THE QUESTION OF INDEPENDENCE/ELECTION DATES, BUT WHEN HE DID RAISE IT ALMOST AS AN AFTERTHOUGHT, HE INDICATED THIS WAS SOMETHING THAT WOULD HAVE TO BE DISCUSSED. (HE EARLIER TOLD BRITISH AMBASSADOR SCOTT THAT THE ELECTION DATE WAS A MAJOR ISSUE.)

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7. FOURIE HIMSELF DID NOT RAISE THE QUESTION OF SWAPO MILITARY ACTIVITY; INSTEAD THE AMBASSADOR SAID WE WERE SOMEWHAT CONCERNED WITH WHAT WE UNDERSTOOD TO BE THE RATHER EXCITABLE ATTITUDE OF SOUTH AFRICAN MILITARY LEADERS. FOURIE EMPHASIZED THAT THE MILITARY WAS WORRIED ABOUT THE SWAPO BUILD-UP ALONG THE ANGOLAN BORDER AND THEY SAW THIS AS A SERIOUS THREAT. THE AMBASSADOR INDICATED THAT IF SWAPO FORCES MOVED IN STRENGTH ACROSS THE BORDER, THAT WOULD CREATE AN ENTIRELY NEW SITUATION, BUT THE SAG WOULD BE ILL-ADVISED TO ACT ON THE ASSUMPTION THAT THIS WOULD HAPPEN. FOURIE DID NOT RAISE THE RECENT REPORTED INCREASE OF SWAPO GUERRILLA ACTIVITY INSIDE OVAMBO.

8. COMMENT: VAN HEERDEN'S CHANGE IN MOOD WAS STRIKING. LAST WEEK HE WAS CLEARLY DISTURBED. IN ADDITION TO HIS AUGUST 8 CONVERSATION WITH THE POLITICAL COUNSELOR, HE ALSO URGED THE CONFIDENTIAL

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GERMAN AND CANADIAN AMBASSADORS TO TALK WITH THE SOUTH AFRICAN MILITARY LEADERS (PRETORIA 4674). AMBASSADOR EICK'S EXCHANGE WITH GENERAL MALAN AS WELL AS DAO CONVERSATIONS WITH SADF OFFICERS LAST WEEK ALSO INDICATED THAT THE SAG MILITARY ARE UNHAPPY WITH THE SITUATION IN MAIBIIA AND FEEL THE DFA HAS GIVEN AWAY TOO MUCH, LEAVING THEM IN A DIFFICULT AND DANGEROUS POSITON. THE MILITARY ARE ALSO DEEPLY DISTRUSTFUL OF THE SWAPO ENEMY AND FEAR THAT SWAPO WILL NOT HONOR A CEASEFIRE.

9. THERE ARE SEVERAL POSSIBLE EXPLANATIONS AS TO WHY THE SOUTH AFRICANS HAVE DAMPENED THEIR WARNINGS ABOUT A POSSIBLE SADF MILITARY RESPONSE TO SWAPO'S ACTIVITIES. VAN HEERDEN LAST WEEK MAY HAVE BEEN UNNECESSARILY OVER-WROUGHT IN TERMS OF THE IMMEDIATE DANGER. THE CONVERSATION AT THAT TIME CAME ONLY A FEW DAYS AFTER THE COMMANDING OFFICER SWA COMMAND GENERAL GELDENHUYS HAD PROVIDED HIS BRIEFING IN PRETORIA. THE PRIMARY SAG OBJECTIVE MAY THUS BE THE POLITICAL ONE OF SETTING THE STAGE FOR INSISTING THAT SWAPO FORCES ALONG THE BORDER MUST BE WITHDRAWN OR MONITORED BY UN FORCES. IT IS ALSO POSSIBLE THAT THE UNEXPECTEDLY FAVORABLE BEGINNING OF AHTISAARI'S MISSION HAS CAUSED THE SAG TO REIN IN THE MILITARY AND TO REDUCE ITS ALARMS.

10. IN CONCLUSION, ALTHOUGH THERE ARE PROBABLY STRONG SADF SENTIMENTS FAVORING ACTION AGAINST THE SWAPO BUILD-UP ACROSS THE BORDER, WE BELIEVE IT WOULD TAKE A MAJOR PROVOCATION ON THE PART OF SWAPO OR AN ACCUMULATION OF FURTHER INCIDENTS BEFORE THE SAG WOULD ALLOW SUCH ACTION.
EDMONDSON

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